FOUR CALIFORNIAN LECTURES

by

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PREFACE

It was a privilege and a pleasure to welcome Maulana Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi to the University of California at Santa Cruz from 27th to 31st October, 1987. To most Americans, including the highly educated, until about ten years ago very little was known about Shi’a Islam. Since then the name has become a household word which the media seem to have conspired to associate with hijacking and terrorism. The need of the American public to learn something about the glory and tragedy of Shi’a history and about the message of liberation and new life which S Shi’ism brings, is desperate. Therefore we were fortunate to persuade Maulana to turn aside in his crowded North American schedule to stay with us here among the redwoods of the far Pacific. As his name indicates, he is a descendant of the Holy Prophet of Islam through his daughter Fatima and Imam 'AM. His family came to India from Iran centuries ago. He was born and educated in India in the old traditional schools of Shi’a learning and higher education at Varanasi and Lucknow. He has traveled, studied and taught in India, Pakistan, Dubai, Iran and Iraq but his main work has been in East Africa where he has labored since 1959. There he organized the Bilal Muslim Mission which has reached out to Africans of all kinds in brotherhood. In recent years he has begun to take Europe and North American into his sphere of service and we look forward to his spending more time in the west

In each case the lectures were open to all, though the majority consisted of students and faculty. In each case "the floor was open", that is, a speaker is encouraged to state frankly his own views and the views of his group so that we may learn. The University of California does not hold itself responsible for views expressed; questions, statements of views by other, and discussion are invited and where time does not immediately permit, they are brought up at the next meeting of the class concerned.

At this *point, I* wonder if I may be permitted a kind of "word aside" to my colleagues who have joined in our very active UCSC research unit concerned with colonial and feminist discourse. The

Maulana belongs to the group which never bowed to the British, it was the same group which produced Tipoo Sultan, Siraj-ad-Daulah, and some of the leaders of the independence movement of 1857. Also here you may meet directly a scholar of Islam who is no orientalist or westerner, looking in from within: even so he shows no atrophy of that methodological self-consciousness, analytical genius and ability to define of which western scholarship is justly proud. Though he speaks from within and is unconscious of the latest mines our trendy faddists have planted in academic language, he can show us what the traditionally trained mind can do to set forth the truth. His expressed respect for orthodox traditional scholarship in Judaism and Christianity may have a lot to teach us about true openness of mind and ecumenicity, no one asks us to agree with him, we do well to listen carefully.

In expressing appreciation to the Maulana and to the University I would like to thank all the helpers who have worked to make his visit a success. It was especially a delight to see the work on the newly constituted student organization, the Muslims of UMMA, led by Ms. Zaynab Khan, a student of Natural Science who joined Islam some years ago. But it is to the Maulana himself with his amazing store of erudition, his command of English as well as Arabic, Urdu, Persian and Swahili, his undying patience and goodwill together with his wit and good humor, we owe the most. It is our great hope that after he has finished his immediate work in India, East Africa, and London, he will turn full time to work in this continent and include us in his regular lecture programs across the world.

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ISLAM:
RELIGION OF PEACE

By: Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

a lecture delivered at
the university of California Merrill **College,** Santa Cruz
on 28th October, 1987.

The name *Islam* and the Arabic word for peace, *salam,* both come from the same root, *salima* which indicates peace. So we may say that Islam and peace are twins. This peace and tranquility pervades the whole structure of Islam.

The Muslims greet each other by saying *salamun 'alaykum* peace be on you). It is a much better way of the old *an'im sabahan* or the modern *'l-kahyr* (Good morning). The ritual prayer of on Islam ends on peace, when the Muslims say: *as-salamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakdtuh* (Peace be on you, and mercy and blessings of Allah). In Islam one of the names of God is *Salam;* many Muslims address Him in these words after every prayer: *Allahumma anta 's-salam wa minka 's-salam wa ilayka ya'udu 's-salam* (O Allah! You are Peace; from You originates peace and to You it returns.) That is why the final abode which Allah has provided for the believers, and to which He invites them, is called *daru 's-saldm* (the abode of peace). The Our'an says: *They shall have the abode of peace with their Lord. (6:127) And Allah invites to the abode of peace. (10:25).* And when they shall reach that final destination, they shall be greeted by the angels in these words: *Peace be on you, because you were patient; how excellent is then the issue of the abode. (13:24).*

PEACE BASED ON JUSTICE: If we want to study Islamic peace, we shall have to do so in the framework of the overall Islamic ideology. Islam is, in a manner of speaking, a single entity. We should not look at any Islamic concept in isolation; we must have the whole structure in view.

We may describe the whole Islamic ideology in one word: Justice. God has laid the foundation of Islam on justice. Justice has been defined as "putting a thing in its rightful place". Ajudge does justice when he awards or restores a disputed item to its rightful owner.

This brings us to the concept of peace. When every thing is kept in its rightful place, when every member knows not only his rights but also his duties towards others, then peace reigns in society; and the society works smoothly like a well-balanced watch. It is what we call balance, harmony and equilibrium.

MAN AS A MEMBER OF SOCIETY: Man in his life comes into contact with countless persons, groups and things. Is relationship with some is amiable; with some others, antagonistic. Whatever the case, he has to base all his contacts, all his dealings, on justice —thus ensuring peace and happiness in society.

But before that, he has to do justice to his own self, his own soul, and to all the powers and faculties which God has bestowed upon him, Unless and until he maintains a balance between his desire and anger, he cannot do justice to others.

DESIREAND ANGER: There are two characteristics which man shares with animals. They are "desire" and "ange;'\ He is attracted to what he thinks is usefu! and beneficial to him; he wants u obtain or keep the things which give him pleasure and joy; he wants to remain near those people whom he loves. All these feelings are manifestations of the desire. Led by this factor, man is attracted towards food and drink, sleep ant! recreation; it is this factor that creates bond of love between parents and children, between husband and wife, between brothers and sisters, and between two relatives or friends. It is because of desire that man strives to achieve excellence in various fields of knowledge and arts; or to seek authority and power.

Anger is opposite of desire. Fear and courage are two manifestations of anger. It is because of this faculty that man

repulses or tries to remove whatever he thinks would be harmful to him or whatever displeases him.

Man shares these faculties with animals, A cow welcomes green grass and runs away from a lion. If these were the only characteristic of man, there would have been no difference between man and cow. But God has bestowed upon man another especial faculty which distinguishes him from the animal world, and that is "Reason". In Arabic language, reason is called *'aql* which literally means, a tie, a restraint.

It is reason that puts restraint on our desire and anger. Reason is the rope that keeps these two faculties confined within permissible limits. You see, desire and anger both are essential for safety of mankind and continuity of human race. But they must remain on a middle course. They should not be unnecessarily crushed, nor should they be left unfettered. They should be properly channeled, in order that they could achieve the goals for which they were created. This could be done only when desire and anger both are under the complete control of reason and divine law. In this way would remain on the middle course, would in the right direction. This medium path is called *i'tidal* in Arabic; *i'tidal* is a derivative of *'adl* — justice.

In this way, when man gives predominance to reason, and reason maintains the and on the middle path, keeping harmony and librium between all his faculties and characteristic, man's psyche in peace with itself.

If, on the other hand, there is any deficiency in any of these faculties or if either exceeds the limit, then man loses his equilibrium, and becomes unjust to himself, and as a result inflicts injustice to other members of the society.

The equilibrium between various psychological traits creates inner peace, which in its turn brings peace in society. Of course, it is easier said than done. Our traditions say that this medium way of life, this middle path, is thinner than, hair, sharper than sword and hotter than fire. To proceed on this path without stumbling, without deviation, one needs God's help. Thus we finally come to the con-

cept of peace with God. "From You originates peace, and to You it returns."

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There is a short treatise *Risalatu 'l-Huquq*[1] (The Charter of Rights), written by our 4th Imam, 'Ali Zaynul' Abidin (peace be upon him), the great-grandson of the Prophet (upon whom be peace). In this booklet, the Imam has divided the things and persons (with whom man comes into contact, with whom he deals) into fifty categories. It begins with the rights of God on man; then the rights of man's soul on himself; then rights of various powers and organs of his body, like eyes, ears, hands and feet. Then come the rights of mother, father and children; of husband and wife; of other relatives. Then it proceeds to the rights of neighbours, friends, teachers, students, employer and employee; the rights of advisor, of one whom you advise, creditors and debtors. It goes on until it reaches to the rights of your adversary on you. It is a gem of Islamic ethics, and it may be adopted even by non-Muslim scholars of ethics--if one has the will to do so.

Before going ahead, I should mention an important principle of Islamic ideology, and that is the inter-relation of Islamic Law and Islamic Ethics. Islamic Laws teach the minimum a person is required to do, and transgression of which entails sin and is sometimes considered a crime. Islamic Ethics takes a man from that starting point to the highest peak of spiritual perfection. If a man is sick and weak, he first needs treatment to cure his disease; after that he needs special regimen of diet, exercise and tonics to restore his body, to bring him to the peak of his health and strength. The same principle applies in the spiritual field. Islamic Laws keep man free from ills of sin and crime, while Islamic Ethics show him the way to noble spiritual perfection and strength. From Islam's point of view, it is not enough to merely ordain some

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[1] *Risalatu 'l-Huqiiq* was translated by me some twenty years ago and was published in Pakistan; its new edition has recently been published in Canada.

basic laws to protect the believers from sins, and leave them at that. A weak patient, even when cured of a disease is an easy target of further attacks unless his strength is restored. Nor has Islam merely exhorted its followers to strive to reach high moral standards, without prescribing some rules to prevent them from negative influences. Of what use will be tonics if body is riddled with debilitating diseases. Thus Islamic Laws and Islamic Ethics are inter-linked; they are different stages of the same spiritual journey, Islam knows that spiritual level of all people is not the same. Therefore, it has chosen for us the highest ethical and spiritual ideals, and exhorted us to strive hard to reach the summit; at the same time it has laid down minimum requirements which one cannot transgress except by exposing himself to spiritual peril.

Many Orientalists who are generally oblivious or even ignorant of this inter-relation of the Islamic Laws and Islamic Ethics, take it upon themselves to pronounce judgement on Islam, unfavourably comparing its Laws (i.e. the minimum requirements) with "the highest ethical standpoints" of Christianity; and then pontificating that Islamic "moral teachings" have "shortcomings".[2]

Now I would like to mention a few of the rights that others have on us— in other words, our duties towards others.

Let us begin with the beginning of all; i.e. God. Islam by its very definition is submission to Allah A Muslim should forget his ego or self; he should submerge his thoughts and actions to the will of Allah. That is the "just" relationship between the Creator and the created. Some of us obey Allah’s commands because they are afraid of the hell — this is the lowest level; and, according to ‘Ali (as.), it is like the obedience of slaves. Others worship Allah in the hope of going to the paradise —it is a bit higher, and the above-mentioned tradition of 'Ali (a.s.) equates it with traders’ mentality. But the ideal worship and obedience is that which springs and emanates from the love of Allah.

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[2] See, for example, G. Margoliouth's introduction to J. M. Rodwell's translation of *The Koran* (London: Everyman's Library, 1974) p. viii.

When man reaches that stage, then he is neither afraid of the hell nor cares for the paradise. His whole being is immersed into the love of Allah. Of course, it does not make him oblivious of his shortcomings and he feels apprehension— not of hell but of Allah's displeasure. At the same time he remains confident and optimistic, because he knows Allah is Merciful. Neither his hope exceeds his fear, nor does his fear exceed his hope. These well-balanced feelings create equilibrium, tranquility and peace in his inner self, or as they say, in his heart.

It will not be out of place to quote here a short paragraph from a well-known supplication, called *Du'a' Kumayl.* It is a long invocation, regularly recited by many Muslims every week. It was taught by ′ Ali (a.s.) to his companion, Kumayl ibn Ziyad. In this supplication, the reciter, after confessing his sins and transgressions, asks Allah for His forgiveness and pardon. Then he expresses his hope that Allah would not punish him, because He, being the Creator, knows that His servant's body cannot endure even this world's transient pains; so how can it next world's punishment Then conies the in which the servant asks his Lord:

> Therefore, my Lord[1] if You will subject me to the penalties in company of Your enemies, and cast me with them, and keep me away from Your friends and those and who will, be near to you, then, rny God! my Lord! my Master! suppose I may patiently bear Your punishment, but how can I calmly accept being kept away from You? And suppose I may patiently endure the scorching fire, yet how can I resign myself to the denial of Your mercy?

Here we find the love and fear of Allah radiating from every sentence. And this is the Islamic ideal of man's relation with God, where the servant loves only God and fear only denial of God's favour.

After this, Islam has very clearly demarcated mutual rights and duties of family members and other relatives.

The above-mentioned *Risdlatu 'l-Huquq* says about the rights of father: "It is the right of your father to realize that he is your root and you are his branch; and that without him you would have been

non-existent Therefore, whenever you find in yourself anything likeable, remember that your father is the basic means of that gift [of Allah] to you. And be thankful to Allah and grateful to your father accordingly."

About mother it "It is the right of your mother that you should appreciate that she carried you as nobody carries anyone, fed you the fruits of her heart which nobody feeds anyone, protected you [during the pregnancy] with her ears, eyes, hands, legs, hairs, limbs [in short] with her whole being, gladly, cheerfully and carefully; suffering patiently all the worries, pain, difficulties and sorrows till the hand of God removed you from her and brought you into this world.

"Then she was most happy feeding you, forgetting her own hunger; clothing you, even if she herself had no clothes; giving you milk and water, not caring for her own thirst; keeping you in the shade, even if she had to suffer from the heat of the sun; giving you ever comfort with her own hardships; lulling you to sleep while keeping herself awake…" Allah joins parents' obedience to His worship and thankfulness in three places in the Qur'an, implying that if a servant was obedient and thankful to Allah, but did not do good to his parents, Allah would not accept His worship from that servant. Allah says in the Qur'an"

And worship Allah and join not any partner with Him ad do good to the parents…(4"36)

And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents… (17:23)

Be thankful to Me and to your parents… (31:14)

It will not be out of place to mention that in Islam the rights of the mother are greater than the rights of the But the of time prevents me from going into further details.

Then *ihcRisdlah* has laid down the neighbours' on each othen Here too the minimum rights have been given as follows:

"It is the right of your neighbour to safeguard [his interest] in his absence, and respect him in his presence, and to help and assist him in both situations. Do not look tor his [hidden] shame and do not dig into his affairs to know his disgrace. And if you come to

know it inadvertently without looking for it, then you should become an impregnable castle to [hide] what you have learned and a thick cover for it, so much so that if spears penetrated into your heart to detect it, they could not touch it. Do not eavesdrop on him when he is not on guard. Do not leave him in hardship and do not envy him in his comfort. Forgive his faults and forgo his slips. And if he behaves with you disgracefully you should not forget your forbearance, but deal with him peacefully. Be his shield against the tongue of abuse and protect him from the treachery of those who pose as sincere to him [but are not]. And live with him a graceful life."

And the highest standard of the neighbour's rights is shown in a tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who has said: "Gabriel kept advising me to be generous to the neighbour, until I thought that probably Allah would prescribe for him a share in inheritance."

The *Risdlah* says about wealth: "It is the right of the wealth that you should not obtain it except by lawful means, and do not spend it but in lawful ways. And, when the wealth is from Allah [as all wealth is] do not use it but to [reach] Allah and to make it a way of Allah..."

This is the minimum which, if neglected, would put man in perdition. Its high point is reached when man sacrifices his own needs for the sake of others, gives preference to others even when he himself is in need of it. Allah says in the Our'an: "and they prefer others over themselves even though poverty be their portion." (59:9)

Leaving all other categories aside, 1 would like to briefly mention the rights of some adversaries from that Charter:

Right of a claimant in a law-suit: "...If his claim against you is correct then do not try to break his argument and do not labour to refute his claim, instead, you should be your own adversary in his favour, and be the judge against yourself, and be his witness for his claim without any need of other witnesses, because it is the duty imposed upon you by Allah.

"If his claim is wrong, then deal with him gently and put the fear [of Allah] in his heart and adjure him by his religion and dull his wrath against you by reminding him of Allah..."

And what are your rights on him? He is addressed in these words: Rights of a defendant: "If your claim against him is correct, then talk with him benevolently in describing that claim, because the sound of a claim itself is harsh enough [so do not add to it the rudeness of your language too]; and explain your arguments gently; give him time, make your talk clear, and deal with him kindly…."

If both parties of a conflict follow these rules, no dispute can ruin the society's peace.

Then the Imam mentions the "Rights of One who was unjust to you". He writes:

"...If he did) knowingly and intentionally then forgiveness is more suitable for you. because it will weed out the enmity between you two. And further, there are many people like him in this world, and if is better to deal with them with good grace..."

As I mentioned before, these are the minimum rights which cannot be violated. Rut the same Imam has guided us to the peak of the moral standard in another place. In one of his famous invocations, called *Makarimu 'l-akhlaq* (The Noble Virtues), Imam Zaynul' Abidin prays to Allah:

"O Allah! Send blessings on Muhammad and his progeny; and help me so that I wish well to him who works secretly against me; and treat him with kindness who forsakes me; and reward him generously who harms and injures me; and perform all my obligations to him who violates the ties of kinship; and in return speak well of him who hack-bites me; and that 1 be thankful for good and overlook evil."

If a society is based on such a foundation, then obviously it will be a heaven of peace. As everyone's rights and duties will be clearly demarcated, it will leave no room for friction and strife. When man has established peace with his Creator, within his own soul and body, with his family and relatives, with his neighbours and friends, and even with his adversaries, then

surely PEACE will reign over the world. And it will not be a peace imposed by some outside forces, but a peace which will spring from people's inner selves, from the collective character of the society.

Keeping these moral values in their true perspective, man can change this world into a better world, where human dignity would prevail universal brotherhood would flourish, and lasting peace would reign.

Questions & Answers

Q.l. You have said that mothers have more rights on children than the fathers have. Is it mentioned in the Our'an or the traditions?

Answer: It is based partly on the Our'an and partly on the traditions. In the Our'an where Allah has apportioned shares of inheritance of a deceased, He has allotted one-sixth of the estate to the father and one-third to the mother. It is the only occasion where a woman has been given twice the share of a man.

As for tradition, Hakim ibn Hizam asked the Holy Prophet: "O Messenger of Allah! Whom should I do. good to?" The Holy Prophet said: "Your mother," He asked: "Then who?" The Holy Prophet again said: "Your mother/' He again asked: "Then who?" The Holy Prophet again said: "Your mother/' He asked the fourth time: "Then who?" Then the Holy Prophet said: "Your father."

It is from this tradition that the Muslim scholars have inferred that the mother's right are three times greater than those of the father.

Q.2. You have said that Allah will not accept His own worship from a child who is not obedient to his parents. What if the parents are unbelievers?

Answer: The reply is clearly given in the Our'anic verse, a sentence of which I had quoted in my speech, It says: "Be thankful to Me, and to thy parents; to Me is the homecoming. But if they strive with you to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them; yet bear them company in this life with fair-ness..."(31:14-15).

Q. 3. How can you justify the permission of jihad in the light of what you have said about Islam being a religion of peace?

Answer: This question needs somewhat detailed reply. But I'll try to make it as brief as possible. Let me tell you at the outset that Islam does not want to exterminate wrong-doers; it only wants to remove the wrong. Evil deeds are like disease. They need treatment and every doctor wants to cure the ailments with medicines as far as possible. But sometimes the ailment reaches a

stage where no medicine can do any good; he feels that surgical operation is necessary if the life of the patient is to be saved. Then he decides, not happily but reluctantly, to amputate one or more limbs of the patient. It may cause severest pain for the time being; but it is not torture, it is mercy.

Likewise, suppose that this humanity is a compact body, some of its parts become infected with spiritual disease and every medicine of sympathetic persuasion and rational pleading has failed. And there is a danger that their infection is causing and inflicting hardships upon other parts, and the spiritual doctor, I mean the Prophet or the Imam who is guided by Allah, is confident that now the surgical operation is essential to save other parts of mankind from trouble. Then, and only then, he will order a holy-war; and then also it will be limited to that part which is most necessary to remove.

Moreover, even if you feel that there is necesity of a surgical operation you will never entrust this most dangerous task to an unauthorized person. It will be a very foolish and irresponsible action. You can never be satisfied that the operation is essential unless a qualified doctor tells you so. Therefore, according to Shi'ah Ithna 'Ashari law, a war cannot be started unless specifically authorized by the Prophet or the Imam himself, and that also to the limits prescribed by that Representative of Allah. After all, life is a creation of Allah and it should not be destroyed unless it has been authorized to do so by a Representative of Allah. Accordingly, the holy-war is forbidden for the Shi'ah Ithna 'Asharis during the period when our Imam is in occultation. This is our law about the holy-war. Self-defence is permitted at any time, but to start a forbidden without specific authority of the Prophet or the Imams.

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ISLAM IN U.S.A.
ITS PROSPECTS & PROBLEMS

By: Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

a lecture delivered at
University of California, Santa Cruz, Oakes College
on October 28, 1987

I am a student of religion; and therefore shall confine my talk to describing the religious problems and prospects of Muslims in U.S.A. This country is a land of emigrants, People from different countries have been landing on its shores since Columbus set foot on what he thought was India. They spoke different languages, belonged to diverse ethnic groups and followed various religions and beliefs. You will now find here followers of all major world religions; but the majority has been of white Protestant Christians.

ARRIVAL OF MUSLIMS: The first Muslims were brought here some two centuries ago, by European slave traders mostly from Western Africa. Those helpless Africans lost their liberty on the shore of Africa; their dignity was drowned in the Atlantic Ocean, and not long after their arrival at the plantations they lost their identity, culture and then religion in quick succession. But in recent past some of them reverted with vengeance to what they thought was their original religion, Black Muslims,. Now Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, the son of the founder of the movement, is bringing them to the mam Muslims tenets and beliefs. They have built hundreds of mosques for their use, and they preach mostly among black Americans.

Beginning with this century up to the end of World War II, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Muslims came to the Western Hemisphere. An overwhelming majority of them was from the Middle East, Turkey, and probably North Africa. A considerable number of them preceded ahead 10 South America and hundreds of thousands of them are now settled in Columbia, Brazil and Argentina, as well as in some Caribbean countries.

From 1950 onwards, other groups have emigrated from the Indian sub-continent, East Indies and Africa, apart from the former areas.

PROBLEMS

Their problems may broadly be divided into two categories: Those related to their own religious and social conditions, and those emanating from the social and behavioural atmosphere of their adopted country. We may call them internal and external problems, respectively.

Internal Problems:

For almost all Muslim it in reverse. In the Prophet's time, the to leave their homes and families, their wealth and properties, and come to Medina for protection of their faith. Their *hijrah* was for God, But modern emigrant Muslims, with exception of those who were brought here forcibly, had not migrated to the Western Hemisphere for the sake of religion. They had come here for worldly motives, for material gain. The Prophet has said that one gets from *hijrah* exactly that thing for which he migrates. Accordingly, those new-comers to the Americas gained worldly benefits for which they had come; but as for their religious condition, the less said the better.

The First Group: Much more adversely affected were those who came during the first half of this century. I do not want to make sweeping general comments. There are always exceptions to every general statement It seems that, with a few exceptions, most of them had but a superfluous knowledge of their religion, or had no knowledge at all. They were Muslims because they were born in a Muslim family and lived in a Muslim society. When the emigration undid the ties of family and society, it also released them from the hold of religious values and moral restraints. They had come from less affluent society; and when they found themselves in midst of glittering material progress, they were dazzled. They were and entranced and lost the to look at the things

in no wonder. Back their political leaders, military commanders and even some so-called religious scholars believed

that the advancement of the West, and European and American prosperity had their roots, no; in their academic research, scientific discoveries advancement, but in hat and trousers, writing their language, from left to right i.e. in Roman script, free mingling of sexes and dancing and drinking. So many new-comers adopted these "ingredients of advancement" as fast as they could.

Many of them lost their identity. Names were changed: Muhammad became Mo, Abbas became Abe, Maqboot into MacBuli, Jafary became Jeffreys, Zainab changed into Jenny and Rabra into Ruby. Behaviour changed and in some cases religion was changed too.

Those who were steadfast in Islam felt bewildered. They did not know how to check that trend Unfortunately, in many places, society could not any leader who could assess the situation, suggest the remedies and implement his suggestions.

The Second Group: Those who came here after World War II, were comparatively more conscious of identity of their Islamic heritage. Many In of knowledge; others came for trade and commerce, were sent with compliments of Field Martial Idi Amin of Uganda. Whatever the reason of their emigration, many of them wanted to continue their lives as practicing Muslims,

External Problems:

Let us now look at the problems which are the product of the U.S.A. society. Broadly speaking, these problems are of three types: (i) ignorance of, and prejudice against Islam and Muslims; (ii) propaganda against Islam and Muslims by news-media, politicians, writers and speakers; (iii) social and ethical problems.

i. *Ignorance & Prejudice:* Prejudice is a product of ignorance. And unfortunately there is a lot of ignorance in the West about Islam. In one of the opinion polls, mentioned in *The Minaret* (May-June, 1986), it was found that nearly eighty two per cent of those whose number one source of information regarding Islam was mass media believed that the Muslims worshipped Muhammad. Reading this statement, I was reminded of a novel *No*

room in the Ark which I had seen some twenty years ago, in which the novelist had described the Somalis as worshipers of Muhammad,

Recently there was a cover story in *Time* magazine, showing how the standard of education was going down in the U.S.A.. It showed the decline in every field of knowledge. For example in history, majority of the students wrote that American Civil War was fought in Europe; Declaration of Independence was written by Abraham Lincoln; and soon.

After reading that story, I am now inclined to give the American public benefit of doubt. I would say that they know as much about Islam as they know about their own history or geography!

Many Americans identify Islam with Arabs, or Iranians, or some such ethnic groups. Islam is perceived as an anti-Christian or anti-Semitic religion. They have no idea that Islam itself originated among the Semitic tribes, nor do they know that the Islam and the Our'an revere the previous prophets and have put the Jews and the Christians in a separate favoured category of *Ahlu 'l-kitab* (the people of the Book).

ii. *Propaganda-Against Islam & Muslims: I* would like to quote observations of Mr. Herbert S. Wilson, a sympathetic non-Muslim who explained some underlying causes of anti-Islamic attitude in an article, "Misunderstanding Islam/' He thinks, and I agree, that the mass media is the root cause of the wide-spread ignorance about Islam. It is generally believed that American news media is the freest, but people equate this freedom with accuracy. They think that the freest media must also be the most truthful. The same issue of *The Minaret* gives a quotation from Edward Mortimer, former foreign correspondent of *The Times* (London) in which he says: "Why worry? All that is expected of you is a good story, so let them have it. Truth? What is truth?"

I will give you an example of the level of truth and accuracy attained bv journalists. After the recent blood-bath at Mecca, a

journalist wrote that the procession was being directed by Ruhullah, wife of Ayatullah Khumaini!

As a result many highly opinionated statements are accepted as facts. Thus they begin to believe caricatures as facts. They to sincerely believe that Islam is a backward religion, a stagnant culture; Muslims are fanatics; Iranians (or Arab, depending on the American government's politics of a given time) are blood-thirsty terrorists, The name of the game is labelling.

iii. Social & Ethical Problems: The above mentioned ignorance and prejudice is curable. The responsibility lies primarily on the to Muslim to present Islam to the American public (forget about politicians) in its true perspective. Then the responsibility goes to the American public to learn the facts before accepting cheap journalism as truth. Of course, it is a very slow process, but not impossible.

But I am. not so optimistic about the social and ethical, environment of the country. Of course again it is not a generalization. And I am not going to pass judgement on any trend of thought, or mode of life. It is the individual's concern, not mine. Everyone is free to behave as he likes, and so am I, to say what I believe is the state of the affairs. As I said the individuals' behavior is not my concern. But it becomes my concern when it to tries to engulf Muslim children and make them lose their footing. Muslim parents' primary concern nowadays is not the prevailing ignorance about Islam, or the against Islam. Their immediate is as to how to protect their upcoming iin-Islamic ways being as the of advancement The real problem is the family-ties are now loosened and in many totally broken. People now do not think any bad thing that it might bring disgrace to their families.

The United States' constitution is based on the principle of separation of the Church and the State. Its roots go deep into the history, as many of those who came here in early days of colonization had done so to escape from religious persecutions in their countries of origin.

But the Constitution does not say that the society too should be divorced from religion. From a Muslim's point of view, it is

unfortunate that the ethical values which had prevailed even half a century ago, have greatly diminished; this has opened the doors to a vast array of trendy ideas and mushrooming cults in the midst of spiritual emptiness.

People still say that it is an over-whelmingly Christian country, I WISH IT WAS.

Jesus Christ had said: "You have heard that it was said by them of old times: Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already in Ms heart." (Matt 5:27-28)

And what are the burning questions, dominating of the American society nowadays? They are: Whether be free or not; whether sex education should be given in schools or not; licentiousness and promiscuity have become norm of the day, so so that chastity is considered abnormal. Magazines, novels, movies, TV shows and video industries, all thrive on sex and violence. Advertisement becomes flop if it does not show a woman's body in various degrees of nudity. This commercialism has turned womanhood into a sort of merchandise. Purveyors of narcotics are hunted down and punished. Why? Because these drugs corrupt the body. But manufacturers of nasty video films showing all types of violence and explicit sex are free to amass millions from their trade. Nobody cares that such films, magazines and shows corrupt the soul. Here I am reminded of the question put by Jesus Christ: If you have gained the whole world and lost your soul, what have you gained?

Journalists and even some academicians vie with each other in inventing some long-winded, high-sounding names for religious sins. Theft is called kleptomania, fornication is pre-rnarital sex, adultery is called extra-marital sex. In this way they take out the sting of sin from sinful behavior and put a garb of normalcy on these shameful actions. The sinners are no more ashamed of their behaviour. They proudly announce their homosexuality, their lesbianism and sodomy. Only this month a huge demonstration (estimates range between two to five hundred thousand) was taken out in Washington in which sodomites and lesbians proudly

announced their sins and demanded "recognition". In the midst of all the arguments for or against abortion, I have not seen any journalist exhorting the society that it should re-establish the ideal of chastity. Ways are suggested as how to prevent pregnancy, hut nobody speaks of chastity.

I think here I should quote a parable given by our first Imam, ‘Ali (peace he upon him). He said: "Gabriel came to Adam and said to him: O Adam! I have been ordered to let you choose one of the three things. Therefore choose one and leave the other two. Adam asked: What are the three things? Gabriel said: Wisdom, modesty and religion, Adam said: I choose wisdom. Gabriel said to modesty and religion to withdraw and leave Adam; but they replied: O Gabriel! We both ha\ : been told by God to remain with wisdom wherever it may he. So Gabriel ..aid: Then do what you have been told and he ascended to heaven.”

An Encouraging Factor: From a Muslim's point of view it is fortunate that some religious communities and denominations, like the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Jews, are striving to hold fast to their religious teachings.

The Muslims should join hands with all those communities who are trying to stem the flood of licentiousness and irreligiousness. Twists of the Middle East politics should not prevent them from standing shoulder to shoulder for the sake of common causes of ethics and morality.

PROSPECTS

Muslims are now fully aware of these problem. Now they are awake. Perhaps their biggest difficulty is the lack of unified leadership. Nowadays a t of war is going on among various groups of t Muslim intelligentsia here because of their having allegiance to this or that Middle Eastern country and trying to pull the Muslim *umrnah* in this or that direction.

However, there is a feeling that before exposing their children to the above-mentioned unhealthy environment, they must immunize them through proper religious education and training

Steps have been taken in some big cities as well as some small places to establish religious schools.

Mosque is center of Islamic activities, and now there are hundreds of mosques in U.S.A. and Canada.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION S

Muslims at present are more concerned with preserving their own religious identity. They are not paying much attention to spreading the message of Islam among non-Muslims. There are some Sufi groups who are engaged in this field. Also Islamic Information Service, an organization in Southern California, is producing since Ramadan 1985 television shows on Islam, which is heard from LA to Buffalo, *(The Minaret,* Summer 1987) Some conversions have been made through personal contacts. And that is how it should be. Islam was not spread by sword; it spread through noble virtues of the Prophet and the Muslims. Just an example will suffice here. The Prophet used to pass a house every day. An old lady used to stand, with the basket of garbage in hand, waiting for the Prophet to pass. When the Prophet reached near her, she threw the garbage on his head. The Prophet never admonished hen One day the routine was broken. The Prophet asked the neighbours where the old lady was; he was told she was sick. The Prophet sought permission of the lady and entered the house. She thought he had come to take revenge. But the Prophet asked her how was she feeling and if there was anything he could do for her — nursing her, getting medicine or food for hen The woman was surprised. And she at once accepted Islam. You see, there was no theological argument or philosophical discussion. It was only the noble virtue of the Prophet which attracted people to Islam. And lastly, I will tell you another anecdote which will show you in miniature how this godless society pollutes our children's minds: A teacher in a Muslim *madrasah* in U.S.A. was teaching young Muslim kids on a weekend. When she narrated the above story of the Prophet, a small kid got up and fired his question: "Why didn't he sue her?"

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THE CULTURE OF THE MUSLIMS IN INDIA

By: Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

a lecture delivered at the Anthropology Department University of California Santa Cruz, on Thursday, 29th October, 1987

As Professor Pandya has told you, I am sup-posed to speak on the Muslim Culture in India. Although I know about religion, I do not know much about culture. Therefore, whatever I will say, will be based not on book knowledge, but on personal experience and observation.

ISLAM IN INDIA: The of Muslims in India is greater in any single Muslim country, except Indonesia. There are about 105 million Muslims in India, out of 750 million of the total Indian population, which comes to about 15%. Their number is in fact greater than the whole Mid-die East Muslim population taken together.

The Muslims have lived in India, in small or large numbers, since the beginning of Islam. There are legends and traditions which say that Islam reached Rajputana, in the heart of India, during the days of the Prophet himself. Even if there is some doubt about the authenticity of that legend, there is no doubt whatsoever that Islam had entered India within fifty years after the death of the Prophet. It was brought there by the refugees who had fled Arabia to escape from the persecution because of sectarian differences. Since then Islam has taken root in the Indian soil.

When two cultures meet, they cannot remain isolated from each other. There is always tangible and intangible action and reaction; there is always a continuous give and take. It affects the

newly arrived culture as well as the old established one. The resulting culture is, in most cases, more vital and refined than the originals.

Islam was spread in India through the efforts, and the good virtuous lives, of the Sufis, i.e. the mystics. It may seem strange to many who are influenced by the common cliche that "Islam was spread by sword." Although this is not the place to talk on this subject; but I think some light should be thrown on it.

The fact is that it was not Islam that was spread by sword. It would be more to the point to say that the Muslim empire —or the Arab empire— was spread by sword. No doubt a great empire was established. But one or two examples will show how insignificant effect it had on the spreading of Islam:

Some 88 years after the death of the Prophet, the Caliph 'Urnar ibn 'Abdu 'l-'Aziz came to the throne. The Muslim empire by that time had stretched from Spain and the north-west of Africa to the present day Pakistan, and going north to Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan (in present day's Russia).[3] But what was done to propagate Islam in the colonies? (he answer may he found in a circular letter sent by the Caliph to his governors, in which he, mfer d/m, wrote that it was a matter of concern that even after all those decades of Muslim rule, nothing was done to spread Islam in the colonies; therefore, the governors should do something to rectify the situation. But this directive did not please the governors. The governor of Egypt wrote back that if he tried to spread Islam and people became Muslims, the *jizya* (poll-tax levied on non-Muslims under Muslim rule —it was the only tax they had to pay) would stop and the treasury would he empty. The governor of Persia wrote that even the few persons who had accepted Islam, had not done so with sincerity; that they had not got themselves circumcised. Caliph wrote to the former that it was preferable to have the treasury empty and encourage the Egyptians to embrace Islam, rather than having the treasury full and the Egyptians

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[3] This is a lad which has hccn acknowledged even by some non-Muslim writers ol India. Sec, for example, Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs,* vol. 1 (N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963) pp. 20-28.

outside the fold of Islam. To the latter he wrote back that the Prophet had come to propagate the Creed: There is none to be worshipped except Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; he had not come to circumcise the people.

However, this attitude of the new caliph was not liked by the ruling clique, and when he died only after two and a half years, it was widely believed that he was poisoned, because he wanted to take the empire towards a new direction.

Therefore, it is wrong to say Islam was spread by sword, rather it was the empire that was spread in that way. It were the Sufis whose piety and spirituality made them immensely popular among the Indian masses, and as a result of it, they entered into the fold of Islam.* Even today, every year thousands and thousands of people, belonging to every religion and creed, visit their graves, to obtain blessings and peace of mind through them. Some shrines like those of Khwajah Mu'inuddin Chishti (in Ajmer) and Nizamuddin Awliya' (in New Delhi) are very famous and popular.

As I have said earlier, it was but natural that when Islam spread in India, neither Hinduism could remain unaffected by Islam, nor Islam could remain isolated from Hinduism.

Islamic belief in one God and the resulting brother-hood gave rise to many movements among the Hindus. Baba Kabir Das began his movement known as *Kabir pant his,* which was a revolt against idolatry and casteism. Thereafter, Guru Nanak established the Sikh religion with the same ideals. In recent past, Arya Samaj movement was started by Swami Dyanandji to preach against idol-worship and the caste system.

This much about the ideological side of culture. Now, we should turn our eyes to some other aspects.

ARCHITECTURE: One of those aspects is architecture. Lotus is a very outstanding and holy motif in Indian culture. You must have seen pictures of the statues of Gantama Buddha in which he is shown sitting on lotus. Sometimes Shiva and Krishna are shown in the same position. It has its roots in the old legends and myths, going back to Brahma. When the Muslims settled in India, they brought dome and minaret from Middle East and Turkey. But the

domes built by them in the early periods were, like those of the Middle East, simplistic in design. Then the process of mutual give-and-take began, until we come to the ultimate poetry in marble, which is know as Taj Mahal, pictures of which you must have seen every where. If you study the upper section of its dome, you will see that the architects have capped it with inverted lotus. Thus by combining the Muslim dome and Hindu lotus, they have created the master-piece of Indian architecture, which is rightfully called the eighth wonder of the world.

We also find many features and designs in Muslim buildings in India which show the influence of the ancient culture that was prevalent in India.

LANGUAGES: When the Muslims came to India, they gradually adopted the local languages. Many of their kings and military and religious leaders in the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western India acquired literaiy distinction in theii regional languages. Tipu Sultan of Mysore and Abdulluh Qutuh Shah of Golcanda were reputed poets. The Muslims spoke local languages, wrote in local languages and composed poetry in local languages,

But it was not, and could not be, a one-way traffic. Their own language, i.e. Persian, also influenced the local languages. This is a natural process; language not remain static if it did, it would die. Every living language absorbs foreign words foreign ideas, and thus its strength grows and its beauty is enhanced. Thus, the daily contact in social gatherings, markets and administration gave birth to a composite language, Urdu.

"Urdu" is a Turkish word. Some say, it means army; others say, it means market. Be it as it may. The implication is the same: When people mingled with each other, in army or in market, this new language came into being. There is a difference of opinion concerning its birth-place. A group claims it was born at Delhi while another one says it was at Hyderabad (Deccan) in the South. What is certain is that the new language appeared in both places almost simultaneously; and it shows that there was a widespread inter-action and give-and-take ranging from Delhi in the north to Hyderabad in the south.

Urdu was, and still is, the commonly spoken language in a vast area of India and Pakistan. The Hindi-Urdu conflict is a bitter legacy of post-World War I politics in India. It may be said truthfully that as far as the spoken language is concerned there is little difference between Hindi and Urdu, The basic difference is in the scripts —the language written in Persian script is called Urdu, while that written in Devnagari script is Hindi. Of course when it comes to literary works, the Urdu writers and poets use many Arabic and Persian words and phrases, while those writing in Hindi lean mostly on Sanskrit expressions. In some cases this tendency leads the writer* (who perhaps to prove their high erudition) to use per-sianised or Sanskritised and expression, as to make the Urdu or Hindi quite unintelligible to the common masses,

However, the Urdu language was a common bond among the people of India, and especially between Hindus and Muslim, It was Urdu that gave India its famous revolutionary slogan, *Inqildb zifida bad* (Long live the revolution) which was heard from Assam to North-West Frontier, and from Kashmir to Ras KumariL It is still heard in political rallies and processions. Urdu was not confined to the Muslims; hundreds, even thousands, of its writers and poets were, and are, Hindu. Pandit Rattan Nath Sarshar, Munshi prem chand, Brij Narain Chakbast, Daya Shankar Nasim, Firaq Gorakhpuri, Sahir Lodhyanawi, Rajendra Singh Bedi, Jagannath Azad, Arsh Malsiyani, Tilok Chand Mahroom, Gopi Chand Narang, Molvi Mahesh Parshad are just a few names that have come to mind at random.

We may also say that the Urdu language, or more correctly the Islamic literature, was saved, preserved and put in the hands of the public by a famous Hindu publisher, Munshi Nawal Kishore of Lucknow. This great son of India opened his eyes during the reign of the East India Company, and lived to see India being ruled by Queen Victoria. He started a printing press, and unearthed rare books of Hindu and Islamic philosophies, religions and literatures in Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Hindi and Sanskrit, and got them printed. This Hindu was held in such a great esteem that when the Muslim

King of Afghanistan visited India, he made special request to the viceroy of India to make arrangements so that he could meet Munshi Nawal Kishore.

Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first prime Minister of India spoke Urdu. Dr. Rajendraprasad, the first President of India, has written in his auto-biography that his education began not with *"Shri Canesh"* (i. e.. the Hindu formula) but with *" Bis-nultahi 'r-Rahmdni 'r-Rahim'* (i. e . the Muslim formula). He took Hindi as a subject in his B. A. class.

It was Urdu which was chosen when the first attempt was made by Indians during the British Raj to use an Indian language as the medium of instruction at the university level. When Mir 'Usman ' Ali Khan, the seventh Nizam and last ruler of Hyderabad state, established the Osrnania University with this object in view, there were misgivings in many circles. But the attempt proved tremendously successful. Committees were formed to coin Urdu terms for scientific and other subjects. Men of repute in various fields of knowledge were engaged to write books for the courses of studies. And teaching in Urdu medium started upto the Master courses. And this was done without sacrificing the high standards of education. Soon the Oxford University in Britain recognised its degrees.

Unfortunately, the bitterness after the partition of India prompted the Indian leaders to deprive Urdu of its rightful place in India. Osmania University was turned overnight into a Hindi University; and all the academic and literary work done there in Urdu was relegated to oblivion and none of those titles are now available. Although, the Indian Constitution counts the Urdu as one of the 14 regional languages of India, the language has not been recognised yet as the regional language of any state or region. So, on governmental and official level, Urdu does not exist in India.

Pakistan has made Urdu its official language, although it is not a language spoken in any district of Pakistan. Punjabis speak the Punjabi language, Sindhis speak the Sindhi, Baluchis speak the Baluchi and the Pushto is spoken in the NWFR. Yet the official

language of Pakistan is Urdu. Although it has been banished from U.P., Delhi and Hyderabad, the places where it was born, but —so far as the public support is concerned— it still flourishes in those areas. The number of l! e magazines am! newspapers published in Urdu surpasses that of every other official language except Hindi,

AZAiMRi; Now we come to a particular manifestation of the inter-action between Muslim and Hindu cultures, that is *"Azadari".* If is on Urdu word, which denotes mourning [r]iies commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) and is companions abom 1350 years ago at Karbala in Iraq, The Shf ahs and a great number of the Sunnis observe these rites during Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, In India, this system was popularized by [s] Abdullah Oubt Shah, the King of Golcanda, who founded the city of Hyderabad, Gradually it spread to the whole kingdom among the Hindus as well as the Muslims,

In the month of Muharram, replicas are made of the mausoleum of Imam Husayn; these are called *"ta'ziya"* in Urdu, Processions are taken out with *ta'ziyas* in which poems are recited lamenting the tragedy of Karbala.

Legend says that *ta'ziya* was invented in India — not the *Azadari* on the whole, but only this particular system of making replicas of Imam Husayn's mausoleum. When Timur Lang (known in the West as lamedane) came to India, and could not go in the month of Muharram to Karbala to participate in the mourning ceremonies there, he built a replica of the to him in com-memorating the events of Karbala* (Those who are against *ta'ziya,* say that it was the influence of the Hindu culture, if claim is correct, it does not it automatically unlaw-ful or condernnable!)

When you see some merry-making, you may ignore them. But if you find someone crying, you will certainly go near him to ask what was the matter. So grief always attracts, while it is not necessary that joy should do so. As the rites of Muharram were related to grief and mourning, they attracted all the people from every walk of life, belonging to every belief and creed, In pre-parti-tion days Maharajas of Gwaliar, Bharaipur, Patiala and many other Hindu states actively participated in *Azddari.* They had built

very grand *ta'ziyas* which were taken out in processions and then kept safely in building especially dedicated to the memory of Imam Husayn.

Even n:?w thousands and thousands of Hindus participate *inAzdddri.* One interesting example is of Bhavnagar (Gujarat) where *ta'ziya* processions are taken out on the eve of the 10th Muharram; every *ta'ziya* is given a permanent number by the government, and that number fixes its position in (he procession. The first *ta'ziya* belongs to a Hindu; and out of some eighty *ta'ziyas,* only two or three belong to the Shf'ahs.

This is how the things go. If one wants to remain in peace and harmony, one ean easily do so. But how long can this unity survive? Unfortunately there are some bad elements in every country and every society; and India is a very big country. You must be reading in the newspapers, time and again, that there was a Hindu-Muslim riot in Moradabad, Meerut, Delhi, Aligarh, Ahmadabad and other places. Divisive forces have gradually got upper hand. Communal riots are becoming a regular feature of Indians* life. And every riot leaves a legacy of bitterness and distrust in its wake. Even more unfortunate is the fact that now there is no leader like Mahatama Gandhi who was ready to sacrifice his own life on the altar of communal harmony and peace. Or like the Home Minister, CMzari Lal Nanda, who, in 1964, had made all District Commissioners Superintendents of Police "personally" answerable for the peace in their districts. What is more disturbing nowadays is that in like Meerut and Muzaffarnagar. police and para-military forces had joined the attacking forces against the Muslims, and no action was taken against those responsible for if. This has created a -pervasive feeling of insecurity in the Muslim community. That feeling is not good either for the community or for the country. But the politicians and the powers seem to be oblivious to this danger. They are either unable or unwilling to control this situation.

LUCKNOW CULTURE: However, coming hack to our topic of Muslim Culture, we must briefly mention the culture of

Lucknow, the capital of the Kingdom of Awadh. When you go to visit a governor or president, there are some manners you have to observe, some etiquette you have to tuilow. This culture began at the imperial court of the Mushrr monarchy of Delhi. Of course, there existed the court etiquette in the palaces of the Hindu Kings of Rajputana, But the Moghuis of Delhi refined 2% to a very high degree. From Delhi, it spread to the courts of the provincial governors and rulers throughout India. When it reached Lucknow, the Nawwabs And the Kings popuJanzed it to such a extent that even common people began observing thai etiquette . those manners, in their own houses. Thus the Lucknow culture came into being, where people on meeting one another bow down to each other, use approved phrases and words, each insisting that the other should go ahead — and many things like that. This culture spread to Patna and Murshidabad in the Rase, and Hyderabad in the South. It enriched the Indian cultural fabrics. Although the hustle and bustl oi modem life had taken its toll, it is still the hallmark of civility and culture. This culture teaches you to give preference to others, accord due respect to every one; it trains you to speak politely even while angry, to express your displeasure in civilised manner.

In the past, the people of Lucknow gave so much importance to teaching their children good behaviour and proper manners of talking, sitting, walking, eating, drinking and things like that, that (hey used to send the children to some reputable courtesans. It may look strange but actually those courtesans maintained very strict discipline in their places; nothing was done which could not be seen by the wives and daughters. And just by sitting in those gatherings, youths learned how to behave properly.

Those days are gone, although its influence may be found here and there. I am optimistic by nature, and I expect and hope that the respect and love which the Lucknow culture showed to others, the respect and love which Islam accords to others, which Hinduism shows to others, will eventually prevail; and the people of India will again return to their original way of thinking, and

settle their differences amicably and peacefully, showing love and respect to one another, living in harmony and brotherhood.

CONCEPT OF MARTYRDOM IN ISLAM

By: Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

A lecture delivered
at Husain Day, held at New York,
on Sunday, October 25, 1987

Allah says in (he Qur'an:
And reckon not those who are killed
*in Allah *s way as dead; nay, they are alive*
(and) are provided sustenance from their Lord;
rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of his grace, am they rejoice*
for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them, have not yet joined
them, that they
shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.
They rejoice on account of favour from Allah and (His) grace,
and that Allali will not waste the reward of believers.
(The Family of'Imran, vs. 169-171)

These three verses prove that the martyrs are not conquered by death, The moment a believer is slain in the way of Allah, his eternal life begins; a life in which he gets sustenance from Allah. He rejoices for himself and hopes that even those whom he has left behind would receive the honour of martyrdom, so that they too would achieve this ever-lasting, never-ending life as he has.

Why has Allah bestowed this special favour on martyrs?

The value and worth of a sacrifice entirely depends on the value of the purpose for which that sacrifice was offered. Many people sacrifice their lives for wealth. But it Is just a wastage of life, and nothing eise. How can a life be immortal, if it was worthless enough to be sacrificed for some stones or minerals? No matter how precious gold and diamonds are, they are lifeless. These treasures themselves have no life; how can they make a life immortal?

Political power? Prestige? Fame? Popularity? None of these have any independent existence. These are imaginary things. As they say, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. Likewise, these

imaginary pictures are in people's minds only. They are merely transient images. Now they are; now they are not. A life sacrificed on their altar will disappear just like a passing shadow.

Those whose faith in the Creator is superfluous, can never solve the mystery of martyrdom. They feel puzzled as to why the Muslims, the true believers, appear eager to die in the way of Allah. They call them "suicide squad". But it is not suicide. Suicide implies termination of life, while martyrdom is continuation of life.

Although in Islam even a normal death is not the end of life; it is a transition from this world to the nex *l* How good or bad that life will be, depends on one's faith and deeds. But martyrdom removes that uncertainty, that suspense. It immediately bestows on the martyr the joy, the everlasting bliss and an immortal life in of Allah.

So this is the reality which the Qur'an has taught us: That if we are killed in the way of Allah, we shall continue our lives in the next world with true honour and real prestige. Not only that: We shall be sacrificing a transitory life of a few years; but Allah will reward us with eternal and everlasting life in His presence. It is because Allah, the Eternal, is the Creator of life, and when a life is sacrificed to please Him, He in His mercy bestows prestigious immortality on that life. *Shahudat* or martyrdom means testifying, witnessing. A martyr testifies with his blood the glory of God; his indelible blood becomes a permanent evidence of God's unity, His power and His majesty. Allah as a reward makes him immortal The flame of life is never extinguished; death cannot conquer his soul

Allah has said in the Qur'an: *Surely Allah has bought of the believer their persons and their properties for this: that they shall have the Garden. (9:111)*

Here we find a business deal made between Allah and the believers. There are four elements in every trade transaction: a seller, a buyer, a merchandise and a price. In this deal too all the factors are clearly mentioned: The believers are the sellers; and Allah is their customer, who has bought from them their lives and their properties, and has offered the Garden as the price.

It should not be forgotten that, in real fact, every thing —including the believers and their lives and properties —belongs to Allah. Still He, in His mercy and grace, is buying His own belongings from the believers —which they had received from Allah Himself, in the first place. So He buys what in fact already belongs to Him, and then offers an everlasting price for it, and that is the Garden.

Islamic laws, sent down by Allah, recognize three modes of business deal: (1) Where on conclusion of deal, goods are handed over to the customer and price paid to the seller—all in the same sitting; (2) Where the goods are delivered in that sitting but payment of price is deferred to an agreed date; (3) Where price is paid in that sitting but delivery of good is deferred to an agreed date. Islam recognizes all three types of transactions as valid and binding. But if neither the goods have been delivered nor the price has been paid, then such a deal is not binding in Islamic jurisprudence.

Now let us look at this deal of the believers in this background. We know that we have not received the price, i.e. the Garden, yet. Now if a believer does not hand over his own life and properties immediately to Allah, that deal would not be binding. In other words, we shall have no claim on the price, on the Day of Judgement But here arises the big question: How can we hand over our lives and properties to Allah? The answer: We can easily do so by changing their status. Let me give another example from Islamic Laws. Suppose a believer dedicates his property as an endowment *(waqf)* in the way of Allah, and appoints himself as its first trustee *(mutawalli).* Now he will continue to look after and manage that property as he was doing before but with one difference: Previously he was managing it as his own property; now he shall do it as Allah's property. Previously he was the owner; now he considers himself merely the agent of the owner—agent of Allah.

Likewise, we should immediately hand over our lives and properties to Allah, although we shall continue to look after them as Allah's agents. And whenever the Owner, i.e.

Allah, tells us to return His belongings to Him, to spend our lives and properties (which now belong to Him) in His way, we should gladly sacrifice all that is in our hands. After all it is not our life, it belongs to Allah; it is not our wealth, we are keeping it as agents of Allah; our family, our children, our honour, our authority—nothing belongs to us, we have sold everything to Allah, and when He, as the rightful Owner, decides any thing about His property, we as His agents have no right to grumble. When the call comes to return our lives to Allah, to sacrifice our families and children in the way of Allah, weshould gladly hand back every thing to Allah; rather we should be thankful to Him that He has relieved us from the responsibility of looking after a trust property.

Thus a believer knows that he has no say about his life or about his death. His own soul does not belong to him, and he keeps the Our' anic guidance before his eyes: *Say: Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. (6 :162)*

Let us look at Imam Husayn's life and martyrdom if we want to find the most perfect and the most brilliant example of this verse. A great number of Muslims all over the world have just been busy commemorating the tragedy of Karbala in which Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) sacrificed his life 1347 years ago to save Islam from the strangulating hold of Yazid. When he refused to give allegiance to Yazid, he know very well what he would have to suffer. But he was not after worldly power or material gain which could be abandoned in face of danger. He was seeking the pleasure of Allah, and this he could not abandon, come what may. He was following the policy of Islam and the Our' an. He made it perfectly clear in his will which he wrote at the time of his departure from Medina. He writes:

"I am not leaving Medina because of any arrogance or vanity. I am leaving, so that I may reform the community of my grandfather, and so that I may enjoin good and forbid evil, and establish the way of my grandfather, the Messenger of Allah, and my father, the Leader of the faithful."

This explains in prose what Imam Husayn often declared in a poem when he was proceeding to Iraq. He was frequently heard reciting these two lines:

If the religion of Muhammad
cannot be kept intact
except with the sacrifice of my head,
then O swords! come and take it.

And to save the religion of Muhammad, Imam Husayn offered not one, but at least 72, heads. He, and his children and companions were denied water for three days; his companions, relatives and children were killed; even the six-month's infant, 'All Asghar, was made target of a three-pointed arrow. When Imam Husayn was martyred, the ladies of the Prophet's household were imprisoned, and brought to the courts of Ibn Zayad and Yazid in Kufa and Damascus. But their determination, their firm resolve, like that of Imam Husayn never faltered.

And who can imagine the determination, the love and the joy which Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) had and felt for Islam, for the cause of Allah. On l()th Muharram, when every passing moment brought a new hardship for him and his small caravan, Imam's face radiated more and more with content and tranquillity. It was this prestigious love of Allah which prompted Imam Husayn to say to Allah in the last moments of his earthly life: *O Alldli! I left the world altogether for Your love I orphaned my children so as to see You*

Even if You cut me into pieces in way of love My heart would not incline to anyone but You.

In this way he has shown us how a man should live for Allah and how he should die for Allah. His supreme sacrifice has taught us how we can turn death into eternal life.

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